LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.
GIFT OF
Minnesota. Historical soc.
Received Nov. , 1900.
Accession No. 81506 . Class No. .

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/mrsjedecampsweet00sweerich

MRS. J. E. DE CAMP SWEET'S NARRATIVE OF HER CAPTIVITY IN THE SIOUX OUTBREAK OF 1862.

After a lapse of more than thirty years I am solicited to write an account of my captivity among the Sioux Indians during the massacre of 1862. It is a part of my life which I would much rather forget than remember, and which, after so many years' time, I can now dwell upon but with feelings of the utmost horror.

It is not my purpose in these pages to attempt a portrayal of the dreadful scenes enacted on that 18th day of August, 1862, and the many following ones—days so replete with savage atrocity that each moment of time seemed written over in lurid characters of blood and fire. It will only be necessary to dwell upon the subject long enough to record the most important events which history desires to preserve.

Many things have been written concerning the tragedies of that dreadful period; but, as far as I know, none who were eye-witnesses have attempted to narrate what passed in the Indian camp during those dreadful weeks. Having been an actor in the sad drama which desolated and almost depopulated some of the finest portions of our fair state, I will try to give as accurate a description of what I saw and heard during those fateful four weeks which followed the 18th of August as length of time and lapse of memory will permit. Of the brutalities perpetrated during those dreadful days (seemingly multiplied into

---

In a letter of July 13, 1894, Mrs. Sweet gives the following brief sketch of her life. My maiden name was Jannette E. Sykes. My father's family came from England early in 1700, and settled in Springfield, Mass. In 1794, my father was carried on horseback (being three months old) by his mother while moving to what is now Springfield, N. Y., which became the family home, and where many members now lie. I was born near Lockport, N. Y., July 29, 1833. My husband, Joseph Warren De Camp, a descendant of Gen. Warren of Bunker Hill fame, was born in Licking county, Ohio, Oct. 13, 1826.

We were married, May 30, 1852, in Van Wert county, Ohio, and came to Minnesota in 1855, settling in Shakopee, where we lived until 1861, when we went to the Red Wood Sioux agency. Mr. De Camp was employed by the agent, Maj. Galbraith, in charge of the saw-mill. We were living there at the time of the outbreak, Aug. 18, 1862.

MRS. J. E. DEC. SWEET.

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF
CALIFORNIA.

years, so dreadful now they appear to me), nothing that could be written could describe the actual occurrences which took place from the inception of the massacre to its close.

"Then woman's shriek was heard in vain,
Nor infancy's unpitied plain
More than the warrior's groan could gain,
Respite from ruthless butchery."

For more than a year we had lived among them on terms of friendly intimacy, if I may so describe it. They were daily visitors at our home—not always welcome ones, it is true. They came with their bead work, game, fish or anything which they happened to have, to trade for pork, sugar, flour or anything which they needed most, and always expected to receive in return more than twice the value of any article brought. It was not a pleasant life among them, but we tried to make the best of it while we were there. The Indians, with few exceptions, were kind and peaceable, and after a few months I grew so accustomed to their presence that no thought of fear ever entered my mind. My husband had charge of the mills which sawed the lumber for their houses, and during the autumn following our removal there put in a mill for grinding the corn which the Indians raised on their lands. They came almost daily with their bags of corn to be ground, and would linger about the doors and windows, asking questions and receiving answers about everything usually discussed, and in their childish way comprehending many things; but they seemed more especially interested in the conflict between our disrupted states. Our daily papers came in each weekly budget of mail, and those of us who had friends at the front eagerly scanned the lists for news of our loved ones. Nothing seemed more terrible then than waiting for news from the seat of war.

How well I remember the usual reply when asking my husband for news. "All quiet on the Potomac" was invariably his answer.

Of course the Indians could not help knowing of our many reverses during that and the following year, and drew their own conclusions. Not until I became a captive did I realize how they put things together and which seemed to have woven a web of fate around their unconscious victims. They often described, most accurately, the accounts of the terrible battles in

which our defeats were more numerous than our victories, and when the call came for additional troops and they were actually enlisted in our very midst, taking half-bloods, employes, every one for soldiers, small wonder that they should think our government in the last throes of dissolution. The winter preceding the massacre set in cold and snowy, the roads were drifted and almost impassable. There was a great amount of suffering among the Indians, as their crops had been bad from drought and cut-worms, and there was much sickness attendant upon starvation, of which there were actual cases. Mr. De Camp (my husband) gave me leave to feed the women and children who were most destitute, and we otherwise alleviated their distress many times when they would not go to Dr. Humphrey, the government physician. The Doctor was not a favorite with them, and they preferred to take the medicines which I often prepared for their little ones. I have related the foregoing only to show that "the good will of a dog is better than the ill will." Owing to the deep snow, the roads were almost impassable and government supplies became scanty. The weekly issues of flour, pork, etc., failed to meet the wants of so many hungry people, and at Christmas time things looked very gloomy. We concluded that we must do something for those who most needed help, and accordingly opened the cellar, distributing many bushels of vegetables to those who were actually suffering. I cannot doubt that our friendly attitude toward those starving wretches eventually became the means of our preservation from horrid tortures and a lingering death. There were many things of almost daily occurrence which showed that the Indians were very much dissatisfied with their condition, but we gave no heed, supposing it had always been so before, and knowing that there was much jealousy between the various bands, some thinking that others were better treated by the agent than themselves. My husband was made a confidant of many grievances, as he was invariably kind to all. They named him Chan-ba-su-da-su-da-cha, the friendly man. He was always very loyal to the agent also, knowing that he was trying to do all he could for them, and he would tell them to have patience and the government in time would do all it had promised and that the agent was not to blame for

the supplies or the weather. June, the month for the annual payment, came and no money came with it. July passed and the Indians grew angry and believed what the traders told them—that "that payment, if ever made, would be the last." I could never understand why the traders should have told such things; but I was assured by many of the wisest among the Indians that it was what the traders told them more than anything else that caused the uprising. How surely they atoned for it with their lives history does not fail to record.

The day preceding the outbreak Mr. De Camp started for St. Paul to transact some business with the agent when he should arrive there. Maj. Galbraith had gone on with the enlisted men, and my husband expected to overtake them at St. Peter, go on to St. Paul and return by Saturday, at the latest, to the agency. Not a dream of danger was in either of our minds, but the separation for even a week seemed long in anticipation. Nothing but the most pressing business, which required his immediate attention, could have induced him to leave me, as our youngest child was ill; but I urged him to go, knowing how necessary it was for him to do so, and pretended to feel much braver than I actually did. Monday morning, after a restless night with my baby, I awoke late, and myself and children (one of whom was nine years and the other four, and the baby) ate our breakfast and afterward I attended to my usual duties. The children went out to play, and the kitchen girls (a half-breed and a German girl) arranged the day's work. My eldest boy came in and asked me if he might go up to the agency to play with one of his mates. For some reason I told him he could not. We remarked upon the stillness of the morning, in the absence of the noise of the mill and the men being away from work. They had all gone up to the agency, as the mill would not run in Mr. De Camp's absence. About 10 o'clock I went into the garden, and while there I observed an Indian coming out of the stables with the horses harnessed. He immediately hitched them to the wagon and drove along toward the house, my two boys following him. I also observed that he was a stranger, and as he came opposite the door I asked him where he was taking our horses. He replied "that they were his horses and that everything else was his thereabouts. That

all the white people had been killed up there," pointing to the agency, "and you had better be getting out of this." All this was said in the Dakota language. He did not offer to stop but drove immediately on toward the ferry. Lucy, the half-breed, hearing what he said, immediately began to scream that we would all be murdered. I told her I did not believe a word of it, that he had said so just to get the horses, and that if the whites had been killed we would have heard the guns and the shouts. The German girl hurriedly bundled up her clothes and started with all speed to the ferry, about a quarter of a mile above us, and I never saw her again. Lucy, the half-breed, urged me to fly, as she was sure it was all true; so, taking my sick boy out of his cradle, we started for the top of the hill. As soon as we arrived there I saw it was all too true. The agency buildings and the traders' stores were in flames and hundreds of shouting savages were surging about the government warehouse, shrieking and brandishing their weapons. Paralyzed with fear, I knew not where to turn. I looked toward the ferry and I saw a dense crowd surrounding it. I knew that all hope was cut off in that quarter. It seemed incredible that all this had gone on without our knowledge, that not a sound had penetrated to our place where all had been so still! I could not reason, much less hope, that we could escape; but while I stood there motionless (Lucy having fled at the first sight), an old squaw, Chief Wacouta's mother, came running past. As she came up she cried, "Puck-a-chee! Puck-a-chee! Dakota, mepo-wa-sicha squaw! Puck-a-chee!" "Fly! fly! they will kill you, white squaw!" and she threw my four-year-old boy over her shoulder, not stopping a moment. I followed with the other children, running toward Wabasha's village, about a mile away. Just before we reached it we met a large body of Indians in war paint, armed with guns and bows and arrows. Each had a war club and tomahawk and were brandishing them in an excited manner. Chief Wabasha was sitting on a large white horse, looking as if just out of one of Catlin's pictures. He was dressed in chief's costume, a head-dress of red flannel adorned with bullock horns and eagle feathers, wings of feathers over his shoulders and down his back, great

strings of beads around his neck and a belt of wampum around his waist. His lower limbs were clad in fringed buckskin and he carried a beautiful rifle across his lap, with two pistols in their holsters. He had no other arms. Every detail seemed to strike me as if photographed. I can yet see him, sitting like a Centaur, haranguing his men, and, as he rode up, he dismounted. Drawing his pistols from their holsters he approached us. I felt that our time had come to die. I immediately fell on my knees, imploring him to spare our lives and asking him to remember what we had done for his sick child the past winter. The Indians, sullen and scowling, crowded around closer and closer, raising their tomahawks as if ready to strike, when Wabasha thrust them back, and, presenting his pistols, told them that I should not be killed. He said that I was a good squaw, and called them cowards and squaws for wanting to kill women and children. They were very angry and determined; but, after a long speech, in which he told them that he would not be accessory to what had been done and that he should protect and defend the whites as long as he could, they mounted their ponies and rode off. Wacouta's mother had disappeared, and Wabasha, seeing we were still so much frightened, told us to follow him. We entered a house near, in which he said we would be safe, as all the Indians had gone to the agency, and he would ride up and see what had been done.

He told us it was the upper Indians who were doing all the mischief, and that he would always be a friend of the whites, and would see that we were not killed. He then rode away. (It was nearly two weeks before I saw him again, when he came to bid me good-bye before he started with the Indian soldiers on an expedition somewhere below.) After he was gone the children became so frightened, fearing others would come, that we left the building and wandered toward the river, hoping we might find some way of crossing. But finding none we sat down in a clump of bushes, not daring to go out on the open prairie lest we should meet Indians. All this time I felt assured that it was the Sissetons, as Wabasha had said, who were doing the killing, as I had not yet recognized any whom I knew of the lower bands among those with Wabasha. We re-

mained hidden in the bushes by the river until the sun was setting, when I saw an Indian, whom I recognized, coming down the bluff toward a house near by. It proved to be one who had often been to our house asking favors and to whom we had sent a man to help him put up a stove but a short while before. Feeling sure he would aid me, I made myself known, telling him how hungry the children were, and asking what had happened. He said that all the whites who had not escaped from the agency had been killed, but did not say by whom. I asked if he had seen Wabasha. He said there had been a battle and he might have been among the killed, but did not tell me that it was with the white soldiers they had fought. He said the lower bands were in camp just below the agency and he was going back there. I asked him if he would protect us into camp. He said he would do all he could, but feared the warriors would kill us. Still thinking that the lower bands were friendly to us and that they were arrayed against the Sissetons, I told him we would go with him, as we could not stay there. We went with him to camp, which we reached just at dark. Instead of meeting friends, as I supposed we would, there were only angry, sullen faces on all sides. Everywhere were piles of goods from the stores and houses, and they were angrily discussing the ownership among themselves. I then knew that those whom we had relied on as friends were our enemies. I asked a squaw for some food for the children, but she did not pretend to hear me. Seeing an Indian leading one of our horses by the bridle, I went to him and asked him if he would not help us and give us some food. I knew him well and had often fed his family, but he said he did not know anything about us and we had better be getting out of the camp or we would be killed. I asked him if he knew of any place where we could go and be safe. He replied: "You can swim the river. It is better to drown than be tomahawked." I looked in vain among all that excited assemblage to find one friendly face upon whom I could rely in my present extremity. The instinct of the savage had been fully aroused and blood and plunder was their only desire. Feeling sure that we would receive scant mercy if we remained where we were, I determined to

creep silently out and hide in the grass till they should remove from there, or perhaps get far enough away to escape them altogether. I had scarcely resolved to do so when I saw Wacouta (the chief who had lived nearest us) approaching as if he were seeking some one. I went immediately to him and asked his protection. He said, "Come with me. You are in danger here," and lifting my little boy in his arms he rapidly led the way out of camp. We followed and soon came to one of his empty houses. He opened the door, and, bidding us go inside, he gave me a small box of figs and left, locking the door on the outside. Feeling momentarily secure, I tried to hush the frightened children, giving them the figs to eat, as they had had no food since morning. They then knelt down and said their evening prayer, and, drawing close to me in the darkness, were soon sleeping the innocent sleep of childhood. What words could convey the feeling of complete desolation which seized me as I sat there dwelling on the events of the past day and the prospects of the coming morrow? Twice we had been rescued; but would Wacouta do as he had said? Would he be able to protect us from their hellish deeds? I did not fear death so much for myself, but the thought of seeing my children perish before my eyes, or leaving them to be the victims of a cruelty surpassing death, I felt that I could not endure it! Wacouta had assured me on the way that he was a true friend of the whites and would save as many as he could. But I knew that the warriors would not be controlled by their chiefs, and that nothing would stay their murderous hands when once aroused. Besides all else, they had found plenty of liquor on the reservation, and a drunken Indian was more to be dreaded than a tiger in the jungle. While thinking this I was alarmed to hear some one trying to unfasten the door, and, hearing voices, I discerned that of Mattie Williams. They unfastened the door, and, entering, I was surprised to see both Miss Williams and Mary Anderson with two Indians. They had just been brought there in a wagon and Mary at once hastened to tell me that she had been shot in the back. She was in great pain and apprehensive of immediate death. The three girls, Miss Williams, a niece of J. B. Reynolds, who had come

out on a visit from Painesville, Ohio, and was expecting to return in a few days, and Mary Anderson and Mary Swandt, who were domestics in the family of Mr. Reynolds, upon hearing of the trouble, had started from his place in a wagon in which were Mr. Patoile and Lee Davis of Shakopee. Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds were in a buggy and they all started together. After a short time they became separated. Those in the wagon were near the fort, on the opposite side of the river, when they were overtaken. The men were killed and the girls ran away, but were soon overtaken, Mary Anderson being shot in the back, the ball lodging in the abdomen. They were brought into camp after dark and were brought where I then was. In a few moments the negro, Godfrey, came in with Mary Swandt, and then a crowd of Indians, armed with guns and carrying the knapsacks of the soldiers killed that day at the ferry. In a moment all was terror and confusion. Lights were struck, curses and imprecations resounded on all sides. The children, by this time awakened, were terror stricken. Mary Anderson was urging Mattie and myself to extract the bullet from her body, thinking it would save her. Mary Swandt had fled to me for protection from their indecent assaults, begging me to tell her what they said. My eldest boy was crying, "Are we going to be killed now, mamma? Don't let them kill us with knives!" Nothing could describe that awful scene.

"It was as if the fiends that fell
Had pealed the banner cry of hell."

Shocked into a feeling of desperation and an absence of fear, I determined to tell them how it would end, even if they killed me while doing it. Some of the young men I knew. They had often come to me to learn English words. Turning to them I asked what had instigated them to do the deeds they had done. They replied that it was such fun to kill white men. They were such cowards that they all ran away and left their squaws to be killed, and that one Indian could kill ten white men without trying. Without fear, I told them that they would all be hanged before another moon; that if the white men had gone away they would soon return; that "the whispering spirit" (the telegraph) would at once bring more men than would cover the

prairies, and that if they did kill us it would not be long till their hideous forms would be dangling from a rope's end. How they scoffed and jeered as they swung their rifles and tomahawks around their heads, aiming to strike as near as they could without hitting. The fiendish work went on until the uproar became so loud and furious that Wacouta appeared, having heard the din and the shooting. Going up to his two sons, who were among the crowd (boys not more than sixteen), he demanded of them how they came there and what they were doing. Then, thrusting them out of the door, he cleared the rest, who seemed to have nearly all been of his band. The most of them were so drunk they could hardly stand. Turning to me, he asked how long this had been going on, and I told him everything that had been done while he was away. He seemed distressed beyond measure to know that his sons had been of the number. Telling us not to fear further molestation, he turned to Mary and asked what he could do for her. She told him to try to take the bullet out of her body, and, using an old jack knife, he probed the wound, first taking out the pieces of wadding and finally found the ball quite near the surface. He brought some water, and, tearing up an old apron, soaked it and placed it on the wound. The poor girl had grown delirious, and we all knew that the wound was fatal. Gathering some old clothes together for her to lie on, we lifted her on a rude bedstead, and Wacouta left us, telling us that he would keep watch that we should not be disturbed again. The terrors and fatigues of the past day were succeeded by broken slumbers, from which we would arouse at the slightest noise, and I will say in passing that I do not think I had one hour's real sleep in the four weeks I was a captive. Morning dawned at last, and Wacouta came according to promise, telling us that we must stay there as the Indians were preparing to go below to attack Fort Ridgely. He said we must not show ourselves outside until he returned. I asked in surprise if he were going and he said yes! That his band would kill him if he did not He carried Mary up the stairs to the loft, told us to follow, and, bringing us a pail of water, shut the trap door of our prison and left us again, impressing upon us the necessity of remaining perfectly quiet.

No food was left us to eat, to which I called Wacouta's attention; but he said there was no time then to get any, as his band was waiting for him and he must be off. We could see from a hole in the chamber the gay cavalcade marching by. The bodies of the warriors were entirely destitute of clothing except the loin cloth, which they invariably wore, and a blanket worn loosely round the neck, floating to the breeze as their ponies pranced and cavorted. They were painted in all the colors of the rainbow, and their ponies were decked with ribbons and tassels of every bright hue. The chiefs were dressed in their war costume, which I have before described. They rode gayly away, shouting and whooping as only an Indian can. We now turned our attention to our own situation. Mary was in a violent delirium of fever, calling for food, and there was not a morsel to give her. My baby lay perfectly passive, and did not seem to notice anything. How long we were to remain there depended alone on the Indians' return, and the families of the Indians had left the camp for the upper villages when the warriors started below. Unless the whites came to rescue us (which we dared not hope for after the battle at the ferry became known to us) we might starve before help came, and but for Wacouta's strict injunctions a part of us would have gone in search of food. We could see the scouts riding past from our post of observation and knew that they were watching. Mary became so violent in her ravings that we feared discovery, and Wednesday night Mattie and Mary Swandt went out in the darkness and found some green corn in a field not far away. Bringing it in, we ate ravenously of the raw corn and tried to give Mary some. But she would not eat it, crying all the time that "we wanted to starve her! and if only Dr. Daniels would come he would cure her!" Thursday, about noon, the war party returned, some of them passing the house we were in. At last a wagon stopped and took Mary Swandt away. Then another, which took Mattie Williams, and at last a man, whom I knew, drove up and told us to get ready and go with him to the camp above. I got into the wagon with my baby in my arms; then he lifted Mary and placed her head in my lap and the two children crept into the bottom of the wagon at our feet. Mary's limbs were getting rigid and she could scarcely speak; but I

hoped she would live until we reached the camp. Our way lay through the streets of the agency, where the bodies of the first day's victims were still lying. It was an awful sight, and I tried to screen the children from seeing the dead. When we came to where the stores had been I saw Divoll, one of Myrick's clerks, lying extended on the burnt floor, his features looking natural as in life but the body burnt to a cinder. Myrick, Lynde and others lay there outside. Some of them had been decapitated, but the Indians did not touch them then or seem to notice them. Just as we were passing the last building which, for some cause, had not been fired, they began to stone the windows and set fire to them. A dreadful storm had been gathering for some time, and just as the buildings were fired it burst with great fury upon us. The noise of the thunder and the flashing of the lightning, together with the roaring and crackling of the flames from the burning houses, made a scene not easily forgotten, and the horrors of that ride will never be effaced. The cavalcade numbered many hundreds and seemed one sad, unending caravan. No pen could describe the hideous features of those painted demons as they rode frantically backward and forward outside the wagons, yelling and shouting and brandishing their weapons with their hands still reeking with the murders they had committed. I will not dwell longer upon it, but say that we at last came to Little Crow's village, where a part of the Indians had camped, and there we found Mattie, who had just arrived. The Indian who claimed the dying Mary came up and said she must get out there. I told him she was dying and to let her go on with me so that I could be with her till the last. He brutally said, "She is better than two dead squaws yet. Get along out!" Mattie came up and we lifted her out and they carried her into a tent as I left, Mattie promising to bury her. She lived about an hour after, reviving, however, to take a little food which Mattie gave her. She was buried there with an old tablecloth wrapping her and in the autumn her friends removed her. We went on farther to Shakopee village, near where Redwood now stands, and remained there until the next Monday, when the whole of the bands went up near Rice creek, where they camped until after the battle of Birch Coulie. The morning

after our arrival at Shakopee camp the Indians were alert very early, having made preparations for attacking the fort. They had prepared arrows with combustible material in order to shoot into the roofs of the buildings to burn them. They were very sanguine of success that day, and rode away saying that they would not come back before "Esan-tanka-tupee" (meaning the "big knife fort") was taken. How they gloated over the anticipated spoils of the day and talked of the good things in the "commissary" and the number of guns and the ammunition, and, above all, the pleasure of hewing down and scalping their enemies! Glad as we were to see them ride away, our anxiety was greater, fearing they would succeed. During the afternoon an old squaw mounted one of the look-outs which belong to every village and called my attention to a vast volume of smoke rising far off on the prairie in the direction of the fort. She seemed frenzied with joy, saying to me, "Look! look! see the big steamboat coming! Hurry and get ready to go." My heart died within me as I saw the flames and smoke mount higher and higher and thought of what might be taking place in the doomed garrison. The squaws made haste to leave with their ponies and wagons, if they were fortunate enough to have them, to be in at the plundering of the fort. I had just had an interview with Frank Roy, a half-breed, and he said that he feared they would succeed. If they did not, that himself, John Moore and some others had determined to get us away if possible. Saturday the Indians began to return in straggling parties, bringing large quantities of goods of every description. Some had been to New Ulm, and the harrowing tales they told of murder and destruction nearly froze our blood. Godfrey told of killing seventeen women and children and would relate how they fought for their lives before they were killed. Sunday the warriors returned and were feasted according to their custom. That day a woman was shot in our camp for trying to escape. Monday morning the tents were taken down and orders were given to march. The whole of the lower bands were in motion early in the day, and the cavalcade started. Their haste was so great that we were sure the white troops were after them. When we came to Redwood river crossing the stream was

greatly swollen from recent rains and all on foot were compelled to wade. In the rush of teams I felt sure we would be crushed, but I hastily threw my four-year-old boy on to a wagon, the other climbing up behind him, and with my baby in my arms I addressed myself to the river, plunging bravely through in order to keep near my other children. I never knew how I got over; but when on the other side I missed my shoes, which I had taken off in order to have them dry when I landed, and was compelled to go on without them. The Indian in whose tent I had been was wounded at New Ulm and had to be carried in a litter, and we had strict orders to keep close to the litter at all times and not get away from our friends. As we reached the place where Mr. Reynolds had lived the train halted for fresh water from the spring. When our turn came and I was raising the water to my lips I heard a shout, and looking up saw a horrible form bending over me just ready to strike. It was "Cut Nose," who had sworn to kill every man, woman and child that he was able to kill. I darted quickly round behind the litter containing my friend, whose voice had saved my life, and after that experience was careful to keep as close to our party as possible.

I wish it were possible for me to describe that march upward. Long lines of wagons, carriages, ponies with poles trailing (as customary with the Indians); each vehicle loaded to its utmost capacity, without regard to size or capability (many of which would suddenly collapse, leaving the occupant stranded, as it were, in mid ocean). The long lines of cattle driven before each band, and the horses lashed without mercy, the warriors riding outside of the cavalcade in order to prevent any escaping, all combined to render it a scene which, once looked upon, could never be forgotten. There were numberless flags carried in the procession. Two or three were of the largest size, but where procured I never knew. One of Wabasha's band, "Old Brave," had one which he said was given him in Washington once when he went there with other Indians years before. The negro Godfrey is one who always stands out most prominently in my memory, not excepting "Cut Nose." He was everywhere; up and down the line he rode, passing us twenty times an hour and always trying to frighten the captives by his

hideous antics. Many of the warriors wore ladies' bonnets on their heads, and furs dragged downward from their legs. Their breasts were covered with brooches and chains of value; from their ears depended wheels from clocks and watches which they had destroyed. The finest silks were made into shirts; beautiful shawls were used for saddle cloths and cut up for head-dresses and waist girdles. There was no device too ridiculous for their attire and nothing too costly for them to destroy. How often I wished that I might have some of my own comfortable garments to keep us from the cold, but no amount of asking would induce them to give us so much as a blanket, and as the nights were cold, although the days were hot, we needed covering, especially as our bed was the bare earth, often soaked with rain. How vividly I remember the time when a medicine man came to doctor my wounded friend, who was about to die. We were all thrust out of the tent and sat huddled together for warmth till nearly midnight, when the evil spirit, having been ejected from the sick man and shot at as it departed, we were allowed to return. While we were sitting outside an old squaw named Hazatome came along, and seeing us huddled together began to exclaim at our poverty. She had often came to our house and been kindly used. Her pity was so great that she offered to give each of us an Indian costume. Never doubting her sincerity, I was greatly pleased and told her I would come for it the next day. I ran the risk of going some distance from our lodge to meet her and receive the clothing. Some fresh scalps had just been brought in and the Indians were having a dance, so I thought I need not fear. I found Hazatome and asked her for the articles, fully persuaded that they would be forthcoming. Imagine my surprise when she would not utter a word. She neither affirmed nor denied having promised them, but simply ignored me altogether. I could not help crying with disappointment, but left her, thinking I would never believe or trust an Indian again. On our way up we came upon the body of George Gleason, who had been killed on the 18th as he was coming down from Yellow Medicine. I had known him before coming to the reservation. All that day we were hoping that the whites would come, as the Indians seemed in great haste, urging on the captives

with frequent threats if they did not hurry faster. My elder boy would carry the younger one on his back until exhausted, and then I would carry both him and the baby together. In contrast to what I have related of Indian character I will relate here a little incident of that day's journey. We had stopped to rest for a few moments, something having happened to the train, when I saw an old man, who had been a constant visitor at our house during the winter. I had felt great pity for him, as he was very old and feeble, and he said his wife was ill. He came three times a week to get his dinner, and I always sent food to his wife. He seemed very much surprised to see me and the children, asked where Chan-ba-su-da-su-da-cha was; if he had been massacred, etc, and darting away, came back leading an old squaw to where we were standing. He was telling her who we were and how good we had been to them, saying that then I had everything and now I was a poor captive, without food or clothes. The old man's eloquence touched me deeply as I contrasted my situation with what it had been, and we were all bathed in tears. He brought up his pony, with poles fastened behind, and reaching a bundle brought out some pieces of bread and gave to the children, who were almost famished. He then fixed the bundles so that my little boy could ride, but no persuasion on our parts could induce him to leave me a moment. The poor old man had tried to comfort us the best he could, and I did not soon forget his attempted kindness in my forlorn state. The following morning we were roused early and the camp was soon in motion. The Indians were constantly on the lookout as they feared pursuit. That day we reached Rice creek, having made a wide detour from the main road; consequently we traveled much farther than if we had gone direct. Here they stayed several days. The encampment was very large, about one thousand tents, I should think. It was like a city. The tents were upon the outside, facing inward, and the cattle and horses and wagons were in the centre. There I first saw Mrs. Hunter, whose husband had been killed near the fort, and many other captives. Mrs. Hunter was in John Moore's tent, and I think Mrs. A. Robertson and her son Frank. We were not far apart, and Mattie and myself often visited Mrs. Hunter.

and we read the Litany in the prayer book together, as Mrs. Hunter was the only one who had one. Mr. Moore was very kind to us, and said he wanted very much to help us get away to the fort. While we were at Rice creek they held a council, erecting a large tent and displaying the United States flag from the centre. Frank Roy, a half-breed, and John Moore felt certain that we would be sent to Fort Ridgely, but after the council was ended told us not to go if they did send us, for some of the parties who advocated our going meant to lie in wait and murder us on the way. It was while here I first learned that my husband was living and that he was at Fort Ridgely. Some messengers had been sent down to see what the whites were going to do about the captives and when they returned told us that the agent, Dr. Wakefield, Mr. De Camp and others were there. From that moment I resolved that I would escape in some manner. Scouting parties were out the most of the time, and it was here I first met Wabasha after his leaving us on the first day. A large war party were assembling to go below, and Wabasha came to shake hands and bid me good-bye. I was surprised to see him and asked him where he was going. He pointed to his face, which was painted black with white lines running through it. I asked him if he were going to kill his white brothers and told him that I thought he was a friend of the whites. He said he was obliged to go, but that he would not kill any one—he "would shoot up." I told him how sorry I was to see him go to war, but he only said, "I shake hands," meaning good-bye, and was gone. This was the party we afterwards learned that fought at Birch Coulie. In a short time we were again on the march and camped above the upper agency next time. The second or third day after the war party left, runners came into camp in great haste and ordered the squaws to run bullets as fast as they could, and all was consternation and uproar. I could not find out what had happened, but knew afterward that there had been a battle. I here met Lucy for the first time. She had heard that I was somewhere in camp and sought me out. I told her that I intended to try to escape; that we were almost starving and we might as well end the matter at once. She said that if I dare try she would help me that night to go to

her uncle's, an upper Indian, and I could there get more to eat. In the confusion of the camp we could easily slip away, as all the warriors had gone and only a few old men remained in camp. We had three miles to go that night, and I found I was growing very weak. Lucy carried the baby a while and then the other one, as we were in great haste to get there. That night I found real friends. The grandmother (Lorenzo's mother) was one of Dr. Williamson's first converts to Christianity. Having been a renowned medicine woman, she had great influence among the bands and she was a very superior squaw. She and her daughter cooked a nice supper of beef and bread and placed it on the table, and we ate with such appetites as hunger alone can give. It was the first real food in many weeks. That night we rested quietly away from the pandemonium of the camp. In the morning some one brought the news that the Indians would move up to Dr. Riggs' mission at once, and as soon as we could eat our breakfast we started on foot to get there before them. I knew that I would be safer there, as there were many Christian Indians there. John Renville was in charge after the escape of Dr. Riggs' and Dr. Williamson's families. The Indians had sent them word that they were coming to burn the mission and wanted them all to put on Indian dress and go into tents. Paul Lorenzo and Simon were elders in Dr. Riggs' church and they at once took down the bell and buried it, and taking the books from the library, scooped out a large hole, and, lining it with blankets, placed them in it and covered it up carefully. The Indians came on Thursday afternoon and began to burn the buildings, the other Indians having gone into tents. They encamped on the other side of a small coulie, as they said they could kill the Christians better if they were by themselves. It was another dreadful time for us all, and I had given up all hope of our friends ever coming. We knew there had been a battle, but could learn nothing about it, only they claimed they had killed all the whites. On Saturday a large party returned from somewhere and Sunday the rest came in, bringing more captives. All this time I had kept hidden from them, and I afterward learned that they were out hunting for us. Late Sunday evening, Lorenzo, the son of the medicine woman, returned with

his mother to camp from which they had started in the early part of the day, bringing in some large turtles which they proceeded to dress for the evening meal. Not a word was said by any one until after we had eaten and the children were asleep. The messengers of Little Crow had returned from the fort, telling him that Gen. Sibley would not treat with them until they delivered the captives, and he said: "Let them come; we will put the captives before the guns, then he can shoot." An old man went round that evening crying the news and saying that all must be ready to start for Red river in the morning, and all the captives who could not walk would be killed. I knew then that the time had come to try to escape. Lorenzo and Simon sat smoking by the fire in the tent, but neither said a word. I felt sure they meant to try to help us escape, but Lorenzo's wife did not want to leave her people, and she was much afraid of the whites. I knew that we could never walk to British America, that we were even then unable to walk any distance, and that it would only end our troubles the sooner if we were killed while trying to escape. About 3 o'clock in the morning Lorenzo's mother came to us and said: "If you want to get away, now is the time." I arose very quickly, and, gathering my children together, found Lorenzo and his family ready to start. We crept out of the tent on our hands and knees, I with my baby clasped close to my breast. The children showed remarkable presence of mind, and no noise was made in any way. I expected every moment to hear the shot fired that would end our lives, but I knew that death was behind if we stayed. We reached the chapparel without being discovered, and there we met the mother of Lorenzo with a few handfuls of flour tied up in a rag for our provision on the way. She said it was all she could give us and seemed greatly troubled lest we should be missed and a search made for us. But Lorenzo knew that in the hurry of their departure they would scarcely miss us, there would be so much confusion. The old squaw seemed much affected at parting with her son, but refused all his entreaties to go with us, saying "she was an aged tree and the branches were all cut off," and that she would die among her people. She embraced us all, and, commending us to the care of Him whom she tried to serve, left us and returned to camp. Lor-

enzo led the way toward the river, and we walked in Indian file, he returning every little way to cover up our tracks and straighten the vines which covered the ground. He would not allow us to step on a log, but step carefully over, and in this way we reached a marshy lake, which we entered, wading in some distance, where he broke down the tall reeds growing there and made a place for us to sit, although in the water. It was just dawn when we entered the marsh. In a short time we heard the camp astir, with its usual noise, and we fully expected pursuit. Soon the usual sounds of breaking camp were heard. Guns were fired, drums beaten, dogs barked and unearthly shoutings filled the air. Being on lower ground the noises seemed close at hand. After they had started upward Lorenzo said he must go back to the camp to see if anything had been left that we might need and find out if they had missed us. The squaw (his wife) seemed terribly frightened at his determination, and we all tried to urge him not to do so. But he said he would come back safe, and started off. He said that he crept Indian fashion, with grass and weeds bound about him, until he got safely where they had been. He found a warning left for himself and Simon, saying they would shoot as many holes in them when found as they had shot into their tents which were left standing. He found two chickens in the bushes, which he killed and brought back with him. Just at dark he came in unobserved by us till in our midst, when he told the day's story and said we would go out of the lake on to higher ground and wait till morning to go to the river. I urged him to go on that night, but he would not. We were almost famished for water, as the place where we were, although filled with water, was unfit to drink. He would not go, however, and we waded out to dryer ground, where we lay down in the tall grass in which the mosquitoes were so thick that we breathed them with every inhalation. But we were free, and, if wet, hungry and cold and naked, we had escaped from our dreadful captors. Just as day was dawning, we arose and started for the river, where the Indian and his mother had hidden the boats the Sunday before. When we got to the river we were so overjoyed that we could not wait, but rushed into it, drinking to our hearts' content. My baby, who had seemed

in a stupor for so many days, now grew more like himself and said he was hungry. The squaw made preparations for cooking the flour and chickens, but the Indian said she must not, as the smoke would show where we were. Hunger at last prevailed, and he said she might make the bread while he built the fire. We were surrounded by thick woods, and there was little danger of our being detected. It seemed a meal fit for a king so hungry were we; the only trouble was there was not enough of it. We lay hidden all that day, and when night came we embarked in our frail boats. Mine was an Indian dug-out but very leaky. We gathered boughs and leaves to put in the bottom and the Indian gave me a cup to bail it out. There was no paddle, only a piece of split board, which was whittled so that I could grasp it. The Indians had taken a great deal of pains to break up and destroy every boat on the river so that the whites could not escape. The Indian's boat was a skiff with oars. He took his family and my eldest boy with him and I put my four-year-old boy behind me in the boat and carried the baby in my lap. We intended traveling only at night, but found that we could not get over the rapids, as it was dark and raining nearly all the way. The rain began just as we came where the Yellow Medicine empties into the Minnesota, and there I lost my paddle, which made the Indian very angry. The current was so swift, and I was unaccustomed to managing a boat, so I went drifting round and round, expecting every moment to be upset, till he rowed back and gave me one of his. I did not mind his anger so long as we were not drowned. The rain came on so heavily that we could not proceed, and at last got out of our boats, and, climbing up the river bank, laid down in the rain to await another day. While we were preparing to get into our boats the next morning the Indian saw across the river on the prairie a woman with five children running as fast as she could. He immediately got into the boat and crossed over and in about an hour he brought her and the children to where we were. She had run away in the night and had secreted a few handfuls of crusts, which she had done up in a handkerchief. We had yet a little bread, which the squaw had saved, and that was all our provisions for the journey to the fort. The Indian said he had seen a canoe when we

passed down in the night and he went back and brought it for the woman and her children. She was a Mrs. Robideaux, whose husband was an enlisted soldier at the fort (Renville Rangers, Company I, Tenth Minnesota). The rain did not cease, but we started on. How vigorously I plied the paddle when I knew each stroke brought me nearer liberty and friends! Hunger, fatigue and pain were alike forgotten, or only remembered, as I thought of the possibilities lying before me. On the afternoon of Thursday we came to a crossing where we thought to remain all night. Suddenly we heard the distant sound of a cow bell; the Indian was alert in an instant. Grasping his gun, he ran into the woods in the direction of the sound and soon we heard one shot and then another, until we counted nine shots. Thinking he had met Indians and was being fired upon, we hid ourselves as quickly as we could and waited. He finally came in with a huge piece of meat over his shoulder which he had cut from the cow he had killed without waiting to skin her. I leave any one to judge how that beef tasted to us after our long fast, as we ate it scarcely waiting for it to be cooked by holding it on sticks close to the blaze. After a hearty meal we laid down for the night and felt so thankful that it did not rain. The next day we made fires and cut and jerked portions of the beef for the rest of our journey. Late in the afternoon we again started, putting the meat into a separate canoe which the Indian had picked up the day before and in which he put my eldest boy and his own boy, who could paddle the boat. We then had four boats and meat enough to last the journey. About 9 o'clock in the evening it began to rain, and as we were nearing the site of the agency the Indian had told us to be very quiet, as he feared there might be Indians around. We had heard the barking of dogs and other signs of Indians. We were going along very silently when I heard a splash and gurgle behind me and knew something had happened to the boys' boat. The Indian had taken the lead, the woman and her children next, then my boat and the others came after. I knew that the boat holding the boys was overturned, and that my boy could not swim. At once I shouted to the Indian, who was considerably in advance, that my boy was

drowning. I gave no thought to Indians and our safety, but continued to shout until he came back and began to hunt for the boy. We found his son sitting far out on the roots of the tree that had upset the boat, but he did not utter a sound. When asked where the boat sank he would not reply. It was very dark and raining awfully, but in the continued search the squaw caught my son by the hair as he came to the surface. It seemed an age that he had been in the water and he was unconscious, but we landed at once and succeeded in restoring him. Again we were without food; but that seemed the least of our evils when I thought of the past night's experience. We tried to sleep, but every one was too excited, the Indian fearing we would be attacked before morning. We started as usual in the early morning, and about 9 o'clock reached the place where the ferry had been opposite the agency. Seeing the mill and the house still standing I told the Indian that I meant to stop and see if I could recover anything. I knew where my husband kept his papers, and knew also that they would probably not be destroyed unless the house was burned. Feeling something would be needed in setting up business, I resolved to stop. The Indian was very angry, and said everything he could to hinder me. But I was obdurate, and for once had my own way. Seeing that I was determined he also landed and all went up to the house which I had once called home. It was a sad sight which was there presented. Everything which could not be taken away was torn up and thrown about, feather beds emptied, furniture hacked to pieces and otherwise destroyed. But I found the books and accounts which I was after, and, taking an old satchel, I packed them in it, together with a Bible, which I greatly prized, and we quickly returned to the boats. This visit proved most advantageous to the settlement of my business matters, and the Bible I still keep as a treasured memento of past happy days, the only article which remains to me of all my former possessions. We passed what we thought the body of Capt. Marsh a short distance below the mill, lying in an eddy among the brush wood, and paddled hastily on, still fearing we would be overtaken. The tortuous river seemed endless, and I often begged the Indian to leave the boats and go on foot the rest of the way. But

he would grow angry whenever we broached the subject, always telling how much he had done for us and ending by saying that now, when we were so near our liberties we did not care for his safety. We did not realize, as he did, the danger to which he would be exposed from our troops had we gone in unannounced, for we all looked more or less like aboriginals. The days went by, however, until Sunday evening came, when suddenly there broke upon our ears a bugle note, followed by the quick tattoo of drums, which told us our long journey was nearly ended and we would again be among friends. From that moment I felt assured of our safety, a feeling to which I had been a stranger for so many dreadful days it seemed that I could not compute them. As we turned a bend in the river the Indian espied a wild goose, which he shot, and we landed. How I besought him to go on! The rain had commenced falling heavily and how could we endure another night lying on the wet ground with our friends so near? But the indomitable will of the Indian prevailed, and we were treated to another lecture on ingratitude, which I made haste to deny, and submitted as cheerfully as possible to the inevitable. The storm raged furiously all that night, which seemed almost an eternity to me, waiting for I knew not what. Hope and fear alternately seized me. Would I find my husband and we be once more united? Or would my children, whom I had brought so far and through such terrible dangers, be fatherless? The storm at last drove the Indian to our boats, which nearly capsized with the wind and rain, and when we reached the ferry he landed. Leaving his wife and the French woman with their children in the boats, he took my little boy in his arms and we started for the fort. It was situated on a hill some distance from the river, and the rain was running in torrents down the hill. I felt that I could never reach the top so exhausted had I become. My clothing was in rags, an old piece of gingham enveloped my head; my feet were bare and bleeding, as were my childrens'; but, oh, joy! we were at last free! Reaching the top of the hill I saw a gentleman come out of the garrison toward us, who proved to be Rev. Joshua Sweet, the chaplain of the post. He advanced to meet us. I asked him if my husband were there. Tears choked his utterance as he said: "I

buried him ten days ago." No words can describe the awful desolation of that hour. Every hope seemed blotted out from the horizon of my existence, and life and liberty bought at such a price seemed worthless as I looked at the future of my fatherless children, without a home and many hundred miles from my people. Every one in the garrison showed us the greatest kindness and means were speedily raised and given me to go to my friends. An escort was also provided to take us to St. Peter, Lieut. Sheehan commanding. It is needless to state that his gentlemanly kindness to us was most gratefully received, as well as that of the other officers who were of the escort, but whose names I do not now remember. From St. Peter I was sent in the stage coach to Shakopee, where we had formerly lived and where we were welcomed back as if raised from the dead, so great was the enthusiasm of our reception. Homes were offered by generous friends, clothing was prepared for us, and in a short time my father, an old man of seventy, came as fast as steam could bring him to take me to his Southern home. There, amid the conflict and din of battle, my mother had been laid to rest just one month before the death of my husband. In a few weeks after our arrival I again became a mother, my family now numbering four sons, and we remained in the South until after the war was over and peace restored to the nation as well as families and friends of whom mine were about equally divided.

In 1866 I again returned to Fort Ridgely as the wife of Rev. J. Sweet, the chaplain of the garrison.

I have omitted many things which would be of interest to the reader, and one which I cannot let go unmentioned. Of the many heroic deeds which history has recorded there is one which should be preserved and told to children and their children's children for generations. It is of the heroic ferryman, Manley, who refused time after time to escape, saying "that as long as he knew there was one white person to be ferried over the river, so long would he be there to cross them over." Every heart thrills at deeds of valor done, and every schoolboy has read of Leonidas and his brave men at the pass of Thermopylae who said to his men "that they were a small number to fight, but enough to die." But Manley knew that he alone must

endure the rage of those infuriated savages. His name should be inscribed among those whom their country delights to honor, for, though an obscure man, he was a hero of the grandest type amidst the many heroes of that dreadful time. Time would almost fail to record the deeds of heroism and bravery of both men and women during the period of which I am writing. In the tent, on the battle-field, at home praying for the loved ones, five awful years were passing, years which now recorded seem like a passing tale, but to the participants so awfully real that memory cannot even now dwell upon them without a pity so vast as to be unexplainable.

This narrative would not be complete without an account of the participation of my husband in the battle of Birch Coulie, where he fell mortally wounded. Being almost distracted in mind at the probable fate of his family, he and others used every exertion to prevail on the commander to send out a party to bury the dead or seek the living. Accordingly, he with others started on that ill-fated expedition from which he was destined to return with no knowledge of his loved ones and only death awaiting him. Of his bravery he gave ample proof, as is recorded by those who were with him and saw him shot down. Maj. Galbraith told me the story afterward, how his old Sharp's rifle did rapid work as soon as they were attacked, and that while he was standing at his side holding up something to shield my husband from the enemy's firing he saw an Indian aim directly at him. He fell down and evaded the bullet, rising again to shoot before the other could load, but the Indian had a double-barrel and shot just as he raised up, the ball entering his head on the left side of the forehead. For thirty hours the carnage lasted, and all that time the wounded lay without a drop of water to quench their awful thirst. Then when deliverance came they were carried back to the fort, many of them to die. I know not whether his name is engraved on any monument which commemorates the deeds wrought by those brave men, but it will live in the hearts of those who knew him and loved him best. I would also add that the Indian, Ton-wan-I-ton, or Lorenzo Lawrence, who brought us to the fort, was taken into Gen. Sibley's employ as scout and returned with him, guiding and directing them to the enemy. The General came to see me in regard to their

numbers and position and the probability of getting the captives. I referred him to Lorenzo as perfectly reliable and trustworthy, and he did not fail to fill the recommendation. The poor fellow was sadly wounded at the battle of Wood Lake, but never got a pension so far as I know. He and his wife came to visit us at Fort Ridgely after I returned there and he made us several visits afterward. Whether he is now living I do not know, but for his faithful kindness to me and mine I shall never cease to remember him as a true friend, albeit an Indian, and one who did not fear to sacrifice all he had for the safety of his white friends. There were many others I could mention as deserving the highest praise for their devotion to the whites and but for whom many who were afterward restored to friends would have been of the number whose bones may even now be bleaching in some lonely spot. To such as those I owed my safety from dishonor and death.

I leave this imperfectly written sketch to the mercy of my kind friends, who, I trust, will understand how hard a task it has been for me to live over those unhappy days which are here recorded and which for many years I have striven to forget; and to all those who are now living that befriended me in those days of adversity I tender my heartfelt thanks, and, in the language of Wabasha, "I shake hands."

J. E. De C. SWEET.

Centreville, March 14, 1893.

RETURN TO the circulation desk of any
University of California Library
or to the
NORTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
Bldg. 400, Richmond Field Station
University of California
Richmond, CA 94804-4698

ALL BOOKS MAY BE RECALLED AFTER 7 DAYS

- 2-month loans may be renewed by calling (510) 642-6753
- 1-year loans may be recharged by bringing books to NRLF
- Renewals and recharges may be made 4 days prior to due date.

DUE AS STAMPED BELOW

AUG 07 2002
SENT ON ILL
JUN 24 2002
U. C. BERKELEY
SEP 13 2005
APR 28 2006

12,000 (11/95)

U.C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES
B003016061
F601
.M5
v.6
815-06